CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Northwestern Energy Pipe Repair
Proposed Implementation Date:	November 1, 2013
Proponent:	Northwestern Energy
Location:	Township 20 North Range 4 West, Section 16
County:	Lewis and Clark County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Northwestern Energy holds a Right of Way (D-3283) with the State of Montana that is 40 feet wide (20 foot on each side of centerline) for the purpose of a gas pipeline. This deed was issued in 1951. The pipeline was installed approximately in 1951 and as existed in that state since installation.
Recently, the Northwestern energy contacted the MTDNRC to advice them that the pipeline has been exposed where it crosses a natural drainage. The exposure was created due to the erosion of soil surrounding the pipeline. The exposure occurred where the pipeline crossed an ephemeral drainage.
In order to return the pipeline to a safe conditions (cover the pipeline with soil at a substantial depth that the pipeline is protected from the elements), the Northwestern Energy is proposing to install a log check dam to hold the soil in place. After installation of the log check dam, the Northwestern Energy will bury the pipeline to adequately cover and protect the pipeline. The purpose of this License is to provide ample area outside of the existing ROW for the proper repair of the pipeline.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Broken O Ranch was contacted by the Montana DNRC. The Broken O Ranch supports the restoration of the land to bury the pipeline. .

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DEQ, Montana Public Service Commission

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative is to allow the check dams to be installed in order to protect the repair work of the burying of the pipeline.

NO Action alternative is to not allow any work to be done.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Description: The project is being proposed in an ephemeral draw. Water has run down this draw during high moisture events or during spring runoff. The water has exposed the pipeline through hydro erosion. The drainage is naturally highly erosive. The soils where the pipeline is exposed are class VIe soils described as Delpoint-Cabbart loams with an 8 to 35% slope.

Action Alternative: The action alternative's goal is to slow the water down that is travelling through this area. By slowing down the water, soil erosion will be decreased.

No-Action: The no action alternative will allow the water to continue to move through this area at a high rate of spread. Erosion will continue and the pipe will continue to be exposed. Head cutting of the drainage will persist into the future.

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5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Description: The water quality and quantity of this area is directly correlated to the movement of water through the ephemeral draw. As water travels this route, sediment uptake will take place. The level of sediment uptake is directly related to the amount of erosion that occurs as the water travels this drainage.

Action Alternative: By slowing down the water, soil erosion will be decreased. The slowing of the water traveling through this drainage will increase water quality.

No-Action: The no action alternative will allow the water to continue to move through this area at a high rate of spread. Erosion will continue. Head cutting of the drainage will persist into the future. Water quality will continue to be negatively impacted.

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6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Description: In general, the air quality of this area is considered good. There are no known restrictions on burning, construction, livestock/agriculture operations that are in place to protect air quality.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will temporarily increase air pollutants during the construction phase of the project. After the construction phase is complete, no impacts to air quality will take place.

No-Action: The no action alternative implementation will have not have an effect on air quality.

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7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Description: There is little to no vegetation in the draw where the pipeline is exposed. . The lack of vegetation is due to the erosive soils. The high rate of erosion does not allow plant establishment. What plants were present had their roots exposed and as a result died.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will stabilize the soil and allow for establishment of the plants in the area.

No-Action: Plants will not become established with the implementation of this alternative because erosion will persist into the future.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Description: This area is generally considered the foothill plains region. It is the landscape transitioning point between the front and the plains. The area is utilized by local and migrating terrestrial, avian and aquatic species.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative may temporarily displace terrestrial, avian and aquatic animals during the construction phase. The displacement will be very temporary in nature with no long term impacts.

No-Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian or aquatic animals will occur.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Description: The NRIS data base list the Ferruginous Haws (species of concern), and the Brassy Minnow and Burgot (as a potential species of concern) that may grow in this area.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will have no long term impacts to these species.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative will have no long term impacts to these species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Description: No cultural historical or archaeological sites have been identified in previous DRNC site visits. The area has been disturbed by the installation of the pipeline.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will have no long term impacts to these sites.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative will have no long term impacts to these sites.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Description: This site is directly south of State highway 21; numerous people inhabit the area. .

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will be highly visible during the construction phase.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative will have no aesthetic effects.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Description: This area is considered very rich in natural resources.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will not impact the demands on environmental resources for this area.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative will not impact the demands on environmental resources for this area.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

Description: No other studies, plans or projects are known for this tract of land.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will not impact this area of concern.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative will not impact this area of concern.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Description: N/A

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will add to safety risk of the workers working on the site. OSHA, US Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and the Montana Public Service Commission regulates the safety of these workers who works on pipelines.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative allows the pipeline to be continued to be exposed and will create a safety risk.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Description: This area is considered agriculture or grazing lands and is utilized for these purposes.

Action Alternative: Implementation of the Action Alternative will stabilize soils and ensure that additional lands are not eroded. Some displacement of livestock may take place during the construction phase.

No-Action: Implementation of the No-Action Alternative allows the pipeline to be continued to be exposed and will create a commercial agriculture risks.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Description: This area is considered remote with an urban interface population scattered.

Action Alternative: No additional jobs will be created.

No-Action: No additional jobs will be created.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Description: The pipeline is considered a taxable base for the county.

Action Alternative: Keeping the pipeline in service will allow the county and state to continue to receive tax royalties.

No-Action: Implementation of this action may negatively impact long term tax revenues if the pipeline were to fail.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Description: The pipeline does not add to demand for government services. .

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Description: The area where this pipeline is located is considered agriculture. No additional demands for government services are required by this use of the pipeline. .

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Description: This tract of land does not have legal access, nor does it have wilderness activates associated with it.

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Description: This tract of land has rural urban interface surrounding it.

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Description: There is no known use of this tract by native lifestyles or traditional lifestyles.

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Description: There is no cultural uniqueness identified in this property.

Action Alternative: N/A

No-Action: N/A

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

N/A

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Andy Burgoyne	**Date:November 4, 2013**
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The completion of the MEPA process did not identify impacts that could be reasonable mitigated. The repair of the pipeline is in the best interest of the public.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Hoyt Richards	
	Title:	CLO Area Manager	
Signature: /s/		**Date**:	November 4, 2013.